

is good for the environment is also good for the economy, and to making their communities better places in which to live, work, and do business.

When I traveled to North Carolina in July 1998 to designate 14 rivers across the country as American Heritage Rivers, I was optimistic about the prospects for restoring these waterways and reinvigorating the communities they help sustain. Since that time, this initiative has helped steer hundreds of millions of dollars in Federal assistance to these communities to revitalize riverfronts, restore precious habitat, preserve cultural and historic resources, save open space, create recreational opportunities, and spur economic growth.

At the same time, this initiative has helped forge new partnerships between citizens, businesses, grassroots organizations, and local, State, and Federal agencies. And it has helped demonstrate how the Federal Government can work as a good neighbor in support of local communities, helping them realize their own visions for their rivers and their future.

I want to thank the many Members of Congress who supported this initiative, including the late Senator John Chafee; his son, Senator Lincoln Chafee; Senators Mary Landrieu, Carl Levin, and John Kerry; and Representatives Paul Kanjorski, Sue Kelly, Corrine Brown and William Jefferson. Three years after I announced it, the American Heritage Rivers initiative is a strong community-driven effort with broad and increasingly bipartisan support.

I urge Congress and the incoming administration to build upon the great strides made in just the last few years by acting on several recommendations contained in this report. Building on this record of progress will enable communities across the country to continue their efforts to bring new vitality to rivers that are truly the lifeblood of our Nation.

Statement Announcing the Chief of Staff of the Post-Presidency Transition Office

January 19, 2001

I am pleased to announce that Karen Tramontano will be serving as my Chief of Staff in my Post-Presidency Transition Office. Following that, Karen will direct my staff, work with me to develop a foundation, and manage my other public service activities. She will also serve an integral role in the development of my Presidential Library.

Karen Tramontano has spent the past two decades bringing more opportunity to working Americans. From her work at the Service Employees International Union to her days on the U.S. Senate Labor and Human Resources Committee, Karen brought issues such as minimum wage, health and child care, and workers' and civil rights to the political forefront. She continued that effort at the White House, first as Counsel to my then Chief of Staff Erskine Bowles and then as Counselor to my Chief of Staff John Podesta. In that capacity, she also worked tirelessly on the census, global trade, and issues important to the Washington, DC, community. I know that in this new role she will continue to fight for these and other important causes.

Time and again, Karen has demonstrated keen insight and shrewd political judgment. Her energy is infectious, her skill and leadership unparalleled. I know she will bring that same level of commitment and enthusiasm to her work with me in the years ahead. I am grateful that she has agreed to take on one more assignment.

Open Letter to the People of Israel

January 19, 2001

Open Letter to the People of Israel:

On Saturday, January 20th, at the stroke of noon, I will step down as President of the United States. This will bring to a close eight eventful years during which I have dealt with

problems large and small, domestic and foreign, full of pain and full of joy. Of all, none has meant more to me than the future of your region and of your country.

You live in a dangerous world, and every day brings reminders of that reality. I have expanded our special strategic relationship and helped protect and enhance your security. As part of that continuing effort, I am recommending that when our most advanced fighter aircraft, the F-22, becomes available for sale, Israel, if it so chooses, will be among the first, if not the first, foreign customer. And we have just concluded a memorandum of understanding regarding bilateral security assistance to give practical expression to our long-term commitment to modernize the IDF.

I also have done my best to pursue the path of peace, for I am convinced there is no better route to securing Israel's existence. For eight years, from Yitzhak Rabin to Ehud Barak, I have worked with your leaders as they took calculated risks for peace. We have journeyed together through times of great triumph—like that unforgettable handshake between Yitzhak Rabin and Yasser Arafat on the White House lawn—and times of dark tragedy—like the assassination of Yitzhak Rabin, the untimely death of King Hussein, and today's violence. Together, we experienced moments of doubt, as terror and violence stalked us every step of the way. But we also achieved historic successes—agreements with the Palestinians in which both sides took steps toward mutual recognition, a peace treaty with Jordan, and, last summer, your withdrawal from Lebanon in fulfillment of United Nations Security Council 425.

I know that the violence of the past three months has brought you great pain, that it has shattered your confidence in the peace process and raised questions about whether you and the Palestinians ever could coexist peacefully side-by-side. But do not draw the wrong lessons from this tragic chapter. The violence does not demonstrate that the quest for peace has gone too far—but that it has not gone far enough. And it points not to the failure of negotiations—but to the futility of violence and force. The alternative to a peaceful settlement never has been clearer; it is being played out before our very eyes.

For my part, I remain convinced of this simple truth: whenever you and your Arab neighbors seek to resolve your remaining differences—today or several years hence; before or after more heartbreak and bloodshed—the fundamental issues will be the same. You will face the same history, the same geography, the same demography, the same passions and hatreds and the same difficult decisions that are required for a comprehensive peace. Compromise is often difficult and always painful. But the people and leaders of the region must understand that to seek a peace without compromise is not to seek peace at all.

Ahead of you are difficult days and heart-wrenching nights. I do not envy the difficult decisions you will be called upon to make to reach a lasting peace—and you alone should make them. All anyone can ask is that as you make them with a heavy heart, you do so as well with wide-open eyes that look to a better future for your children.

To you who have returned to an ancient homeland after 2,000 years, whose hopes and dreams almost vanished in the Holocaust, who have hardly had one day of peace and quiet since the state of Israel was created, allow me this parting thought: You are closer today than ever before to ending your 100 year long struggle for peace and normalcy. Don't give up on the pursuit of peace. Not now when it is almost within reach. For that day will surely come, and when it does, though I no longer will be President, I will be standing with you as strong and faithful a friend as I am today. And it will be Israel's finest hour yet.

Shalom al Yisrael.

William J. Clinton

NOTE: An original was not available for verification of the content of this letter.

Open Letter to the Palestinian People

January 19, 2001

Open Letter to the Palestinian People:

On Saturday, January 20th at the stroke of noon, I will step down as President of the United States. As I look back upon my eight